

**BOARD OF REGENTS
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

WORK SESSION MINUTES

Thursday, February 25, 2010

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building
5th Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room
255 Westminster Street – Providence, RI 02903

Attending: P. Guida, B. Shimberg, A. Cano-Morales, A. Beretta, K. Forbes,
A. Davis, C. Callahan

The meeting convened at 11:35 a.m.

In the absence of Chairman Flanders, Vice-Chairman Guida chaired the meeting.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Gist updated the group on the Common Core Standards. She told them that another draft of the Common Core was released two weeks ago. Rhode Island provided specific feedback on the literacy and mathematics standards and more structural feedback on the body of work. Overall, the most recent draft reflected significant progress. Additionally, Rhode Island participated in a conference call with other states and heard widespread agreement about this perspective. There is still significant work to be done before the goal is met to deliver a new draft that responds to all the feedback by next week. This draft promises to include grade-specific standards. Rhode Island has been asked to also provide feedback on:

- Grade and content-specific achievement descriptions that will clarify what should be emphasized when writing curriculum and test blueprints;
- A plan for how the standards will be reviewed and revised over time;
- Clarification on what it means to “adopt” the standards; and
- Guidance around interpretation of standards.

Rhode Island is reconvening its Engagement Committee later in March to develop a roll-out plan to gather statewide feedback on this final draft. Regent Guida told the group that he had attended the North East Regional Conference on the Common Core (paid for by the Gates Foundation). He reported that the two biggest issues that had been discussed at that conference concerned “85/15” (this does not mean that states can accept only 85% of the Common Core) and that not all states are on board with the common assessments (even if they accept all of the Common Core Standards). Mr. Guida also told the group that another comment period is coming up next month.

Update on RTTT

Commissioner Gist reported that the states that will receive the first round of Race To The Top funding will be notified next week. In the meantime, the Department is continuing to work on planning the interview for the Round I and Round II application (if we do not receive funding in Round I).

Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools Update

The Commissioner reminded the group that RIDE adheres to the federal guidance (looking only at schools that were receiving Title I funds or secondary schools eligible to receive funding) and analyzed both the NECAP and graduation data to ensure that we were confident that the identified schools were those that are, in fact, persistently struggling. We developed a system that assigned points to schools that had low performance when analyzed in several different ways. i.e., those schools with the lowest achievement based on: the most recent year of data; individual student growth; and finally, overall change in achievement from the first year of testing to the most recent year. Commissioner Gist then reviewed the action timeline for the two districts with the lowest-achieving schools: Central Falls and Providence.

- January 7, 2010 - presented the *Protocol for Interventions: Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools* at the Board of Regents meeting;
- Provided the two school districts with the Protocol to guide their community engagement for selecting a School Reform Option for the identified schools;
- January 11, 2010, identified 5 schools in Providence and Central Falls High School as the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the state;
- Provided both Providence and Central Falls with a limited amount of Title I 1003(g) School Improvement grant funds to support program development and design for activities related to selecting and planning for a chosen intervention model; and
- Established an internal-review process for reviewing district decision-making.

The Commissioner then reviewed the Central Falls process as follows:

- Began its Stakeholder Process in Fall 2009 in anticipation of being identified;
- Conducted an extensive outreach effort with the community and with the educators;
- RIDE staff participated in stakeholder meetings and provided additional technical assistance to Central Falls upon request;

- On February 12, 2010, Dr. Gallo informed the Department of the intent to select the Turnaround Model rather than the Transformation Model because she had not reached an agreement with the Central Falls Teachers' Union on implementing several required elements in the Transformation Model;
- The review team indicated that Central Falls had followed the process and that documentation indicated that the district could move to the next stage of planning; and
- The Commissioner approved the Superintendent's selection on February 23, 2010, and the Superintendent will now proceed to develop a School Reform Plan. She has 120 business days to complete it, and the Commissioner then has 30 days to review and determine whether the plan will move forward.

Regent Callahan expressed concerns about the process, and the group revisited some of the steps and decisions made. Regents voiced their support of the process.

Providence:

- The 5 Schools identified in Providence were the Charlotte Woods Elementary School, Lillian Feinstein at Sackett Street Elementary, Roger Williams Middle School, Cooley Health Science Technical Academy, and Feinstein High School;
- Commissioner Gist told the Regents that, since January, the District has engaged in facilitated forums at each school, seeking faculty and parent feedback regarding recommendations for reform options. Teaching and Learning staff engaged school faculty in two forums at each school, and an additional 5 sessions were held with parents at each school;
- A Stakeholder Meeting took place on February 23, 2010;
- The Superintendent and team are examining School Improvement Plans (POP), NECAP, SAT10, ACCESS data, and the data collection from using CARA (Collect, Analyze, Reflect, Act) model that was developed with the Dana Center;
- The Superintendent is factoring in the facilities master plan recommendations, the fiscal cost associated with the School Reform options, and the current contractual obligations;
- Superintendent and staff have had preliminary meetings with the PTU to understand the identification process and the requirements of each of the options; and

- The Superintendent will submit letter of intent by March 17, 2010.

Discussion of Funding Formula Methodology

Commissioner Gist reminded the Regents that during the last meeting, RIDE, in partnership with Dr. Kenneth Wong from Brown University, has developed a funding-formula proposal that is research-based and data-driven. The methodology includes three major components:

- A foundation derived from a market-basket approach that adequately funds student instructional needs as described in the Basic Education Program;
- A student-success factor that provides additional funding to support student needs beyond core services; and
- A state-share ratio that considers a district's revenue-generating capacity and concentration of at-risk students.

Dr. Wong and his team calculated more than thirty different simulations to test and confirm the validity of the proposed methodology and ensure that the funding is distributed in a manner that considers what is needed to adequately fund RI students. Over the last few weeks, the Department has worked on the transition plan, including how the formula could be used to reduce education aid as the Governor has proposed for FY 2011. Legislation has also been drafted that aligns to the proposed education-aid as per the Regents endorsement at their March 4 meeting. Additionally, RIDE intends to provide a description of the proposed categorical programs to be funded outside the formula and an estimate of the distribution of the funds by district. The Department continues to meet with various stakeholders to inform the development of an education-aid formula, including:

- Senate and House leadership
- Legislative policy and fiscal staff
- State Budget Officer and staff
- R.I. Association of School Business Officials
- RI Is Ready

Discussion of Certification Redesign

The Commissioner told the members of the Board that the Department will be moving to a performance-based licensure-renewal system. She explained that it is necessary to temporarily issue one-year, rather than five-year, professional certificates while the components of the new system are designed; the certificate fees will be adjusted from \$200 to \$40 per certificate, prorating the current fee schedule as appropriate. This item will be brought back to the Regents for a vote to go out to public hearing at the next meeting (March 4).

Executive Session

As per RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1) and (2), the meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m. into Executive Session.

The meeting reconvened to open session at 1:05 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Guida reported that during Executive Session, the Board of Regents voted unanimously to approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement of RIDE Professional Employees Local 2012.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the minutes of the Executive Session be sealed.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Adjournment: With Unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.